

THE DUTY
OF
PROMPT AND COMPLETE ABOLITION OF
COLONIAL SLAVERY:

A SERMON,
BY THE REV. SAMUEL CHARLES WILKS, A.M.

The Second Edition.

Price One Shilling.

“ Oh, foul reproach, but not for Spain alone,
But for all lands that bear the Christian name !
Where'er commercial Slavery is known,
Oh, shall not Justice, trumpet-tongued, proclaim
The foul reproach, the black offence, the same ?
Hear, guilty France ! and thou, O England, hear,
Thou that hast half redeemed thyself from shame !
When Slavery from thy realms shall disappear,
Then from this guilt, and not till then, wilt thou be clear.”

SOUTHEY'S *Tale of Paraguay*.

“ SERVI sunt ? imo homines. Servi ? imo contubernales. Servi sunt ? imo humiles amici. Servi sunt ? imo conservi, si cogitaveris tantundem in utrosque licere fortunæ.”—SENECA.

“ SLAVERY is a state so improper, so degrading, and so ruinous to the feelings and capacities of human nature, that it ought not to be suffered to exist.”—BURKE.

“ THE people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy ; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it ; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them ; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath : their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.”—EZEK. xxii. 29–31.

**The Duty of prompt and complete Abolition of
Colonial Slavery :**

A SERMON,

PREACHED

**AT BENTINCK CHAPEL, ST. MARY-LE-BONE, ON SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 26, 1830,**

WITH

A LETTER

TO

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

AND

AN APPENDIX

OF EPISCOPAL TESTIMONIES.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL CHARLES WILKS, A.M.

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN ESSAYS,"

"ESSAY ON THE SIGNS OF CONVERSION IN CLERGYMEN,"

"CORRELATIVE CLAIMS AND DUTIES OF THE CHURCH,"

&c. &c. &c.

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MDCCCXXX.

DEDICATION.

TO

THE MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

WILLIAM HOWLEY, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, PRIMATE AND METROPOLITAN
OF ALL ENGLAND.

MY LORD,—

IN taking the liberty, as a very obscure and humble Clergyman in your Grace's Province, of inscribing to your Grace the following pages on a highly important subject, which may, and must, speedily come before the Legislature with an urgency which it has not hitherto assumed, I feel it my duty explicitly to state that I have not applied for your Grace's permission to do so, and much less am I acquainted with your Grace's sentiments upon the question. Your Grace's name is, therefore, in no way committed by this unauthorized address: and I cannot, my Lord, think such an appeal invidious; both because your Grace occupies a high and solemn station in the church of Christ and the counsels of your country, and your decision on such a subject is a point of great public interest; and because every man who is acquainted with your Grace, either in public or private life, will feel confident that, whatever may be your sentiments, they are such as comport

with all that is humane, and honourable, and disinterested, and Christian: so that such an appeal, whatever were your decision, would not disparage that estimate which all good men entertain of your Grace's sentiments and conduct.

Yet, wholly unaware as I am of your Grace's views relative to a prompt and complete abolition of colonial slavery, and very far from affecting to conjecture that they coincide with those expressed in the following pages, there is common ground, which I feel assured will be admitted by your Grace in deciding on the question; and this will conduce not a little to the repose of wise and pious minds, while awaiting that legislative vote which eventually your Grace cannot but be called upon to pronounce; for the time has gone by when any man in a public station, or even in private life, might have no opinion upon this question. The country at large is already taking it up, with a zeal adequate to its importance; the clergy of the land especially are beginning to feel deeply interested in the discussion; and the decision of every Noble Lord and Honourable Commoner respecting it must soon be as solemnly registered as their vote on the Slave Trade or Catholic Emancipation. This common ground, I say, my Lord, will greatly conduce to the repose of wise and pious minds, in reference to the ultimate decision of persons like your Grace, with whom it will not for one moment be, as hitherto in some other quarters too much has it been, a question argued upon party and personal interests, and misalleged secular expediency and vested capital, against moral right; but it will become a question of simple Christian principle, to be decided according to the strict letter of the first and second table of the Divine Law. In working out the details, difficulties may arise; but how much easier will it be to settle these, where one grand common principle is admitted, than to come to a decision when the whole matter is referred to private selfish interest, and alleged, though not justly alleged, political advantage! The Christian is not thus left to navigate the stormy seas

of life without chart or rudder : he often finds difficulty in deciding what is the just application of his principles to details, but he feels thankful to his God that there is no instability in the principles themselves.

And this, my Lord, greatly narrows the ground upon the present important question. It is no slight advance to come, as all Christians must, to this preliminary basis, that no man has a moral right to make a fellow-creature, innocent of crime, his slave, or his children after him. The chief difficulty hitherto in negotiating with the slaveholder has been, that he urged a right which God has not given him ; a moral, and not merely a legislative, claim to hold in bondage his fellow-man unconscious of crime. Now I feel quite confident in saying that neither your Grace, nor any other truly Christian legislator, will admit this principle ; your language will rather be as follows : “ We, or our fathers, ignorantly or sinfully permitted you to make slaves, and to retain them when made ; you had thus a legislative sanction, either direct or indirect ; but this was all : our permission could not make the act morally right ; we were to blame in allowing it, and you in procuring or acting upon our allowance. An act of parliament, even could you plead one in your favour, would not alter or supersede the Decalogue. To the Decalogue then must we return : this first principle must not be questioned : you, the slave owner, are our neighbour, and the slave is also our neighbour, and we must act towards you both as the Decalogue prescribes. However apparently conflicting the details, there can be no question respecting the principle. Over the innocent slave neither you nor we have any just power : we owe him retribution, and not a continuance of his wrongs. If there be any circumstances arising out of his degraded condition which we conscientiously think may render it not for his own advantage that he should be instantly manumitted, these must be carefully inquired into ; but still in submission to the broad principle, that, so far as the innocent person is concerned, we urge no claim upon him ; and if we continue any temporary restriction

upon him, it is to be only the mildest, and of the shortest duration, that we honestly believe best for his own welfare. This is a point of detail for serious consideration.

“And then, as far as you, the slave owner (so called), are concerned, we cannot any longer sanction an unjust usurpation, a palpable breach of the Decalogue, a continued act of flagrant injustice and oppression ; we must wash our hands of this ; we may alter our own laws, but we cannot repeal the laws of God. This, then, must be our basis of negotiation : You have done wrong, and we have done wrong to let you do it ; but two, or ten thousand wrongs, will not make one right. We are now better informed, or better disposed, and we must no longer uphold the iniquity because we upheld it in days that are past. Our connivance or encouragement gives you a claim upon our honour and justice, the extent of which we must calmly and fairly, nay liberally, adjust ; but this is all that we can do. We cannot discharge you of the moral guilt ; but we must share it with you, so far as our neglect of duty led you to think lightly of it, and to incur it ; and in the same proportion we ought to bear any loss or inconvenience that may ensue in returning to the Decalogue ; but the Decalogue must be forthwith returned to, either in fact, by prompt emancipation, or in spirit, by such measures conducive thereto as we believe in our conscience best for the slave himself.”

Now, my Lord, if only such principles as these once come to be admitted as the basis of the arrangement, I doubt not the adjustment of the details will be comparatively easy. And here the friends of the unhappy slave will look with sanguine hope to prelates and senators like-minded with your Grace. The abolitionists have hitherto been grieved and tortured at finding the question staved off by crooked policy and fallacious selfishness, without any thing like a reduction of it to its moral elements. No one has lamented more strongly and justly than your Grace, the unhappy practice of measuring great public questions of right and wrong by this base and unworthy standard.

As respects the principle, then, I feel assured there can be no doubt of what are and must be your Grace's sentiments. Your view of the details of adjustment I cannot presume to conjecture, not being even aware whether their merits have been distinctly brought before your notice. But this is a minor consideration ; what is chiefly needed is common ground on which to argue the question : and this being conceded, as by your Grace for one I am persuaded it will be, wise and honest men, after adequate investigation, will not find it impossible to arrive at an amicable conclusion. As a very humble individual, I beg permission to record my own full persuasion, grounded on many years' attention to every document I could discover bearing upon the subject, that there is no alarming difficulty in the way even of a prompt and complete extinction of colonial slavery ; and that, complicated as may appear the question, justice and true policy go hand in hand in demanding the most speedy abolition of the evil. The difficulties which have been so pertinaciously obtruded, by persons interested in the system, are not greater than must apply to almost every national plan of improvement : the capital invested in slaves stands on the same footing as did the capital that was invested in the slave trade, and the same considerations apply to both questions.

Your Grace was pleased to express yourself, some years since, in terms which it would not become me to repeat, of a Memoir of mine on the slave trade, especially as carried on by Frenchmen and connived at by the French government : the very same principles appear to me to bear equally on the abolition of slavery ; nor can I perceive, as respects the slave, what there is to make even sudden liberty more dangerous in a body of men liberated on a plantation in Jamaica, than if liberated from the hold of a slave vessel in Sierra Leone : and as respects the owner, I can see no greater difficulty in adjusting the claims to whatever may be just compensation in the case of capital criminally, though legally, invested in human beings, than when it was invested in Liverpool slave-shipping and

Negro depôts on the coast of Africa. But these are details, and they may be right or wrong: my object at present is only to advert to principles; and respecting these, with the Bible in my hand, I cannot doubt what is right.

And now, my Lord, allow me to advert to another topic; and neither this will I call an invidious, though a painful, topic, since the connexion of your Grace's name personally with it has been only that which is humane, honourable, and Christian. I allude to the Barbadoes estates held by the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; the most ancient of all British missionary institutions either in or out of our Church, and which, under the auspices of your Grace, will, I trust, by the blessing of God, become increasingly an instrument to promote the best welfare of the human race. Having obtained access several years ago to a very extensive collection of the Society's Reports for more than a century, I was struck with the many melancholy circumstances connected with this slave-cultured property, the holding of which by the Society, as bequeathed in trust for benevolent objects, was a sacred charge, which, however anxious the members might be to fulfil, did not for a century succeed in their hands, either as regards pecuniary advantage or the religious welfare of the slave. Many of the sermons, preached by a long succession of Bishops before the Society, shew how honourably zealous they were; some of them for the emancipation, and more for bettering the condition of slaves generally: but it seems never to have been suspected by them that their own slaves were wretchedly managed, and in a state little better than the beasts that perish; that marriage was unknown among them; that they were not permitted to learn to read the Scriptures, "as it would take up too much time;" that their religious instruction was neglected; and that the Christian Sabbath was no Sabbath to them, the Sunday being allowed them, said the Society's agent, "to labour for themselves." In vain Bishop Porteus urged the subject upon the Society;

his remonstrances were overruled ; and he retired from the Society, in despair of effecting any amelioration, much less what he wished, the extinction of the system and the enfranchisement of the slaves. His efforts, however, produced some partial effect upon the next generation, so that within the last few years a chaplain has been appointed for the Negroes, and some other well-intended measures have been devised for their advantage.

Yet, my Lord, to this hour the root of the evil remains in all its bitterness. Again and again have the Society sent out humane and ameliorating orders ; but which of them has been obeyed ? How grievously, for example, have they been deceived in the matter of the slave-whip, which had been ordered to be laid aside, and, it was averred, had been laid aside, while it continued in all its terrors ! It is now again said to be laid aside ; but what is substituted in its place ? It is not pretended that wages are given to the slave ; much less that he works from affection : severity, therefore, of some sort is and must be the real stimulus. And then in the matter of marriage, no one can have felt more deeply pained than your Grace, that the slaves on the Society's estates, after a century and a quarter of occupation, slaves born and educated, and many of their fathers before them, on the lands of a Christian institution, should have been notoriously living in concubinage and polygamy, and coming in that state of gross vice to the Lord's Supper. How much your Grace, and other prelates and friends of the Society, were shocked at the discovery of these things ; how incredible they appeared, how strongly they were at first denied, I need not relate. My only object in referring to them is to shew how incurable is the whole of the colonial slave-system ; how utterly unreasonable is all hope of amendment ; how inefficient is every remedy short of its abolition. Far from introducing the topic invidiously, I adduce it in quite a contrary aspect ; for if there could have been any thing that could induce well-judging persons to expect that amelioration might supersede the necessity for extirpation,

it surely would have been the example of estates so peculiarly favoured for every possible improvement as those of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. But if even here the experiment has failed ; if the dearest wishes and hopes, the most earnest remonstrances and positive orders, of your Society, with no restriction as to expense, if only the great object might be promoted, have effected so little, what can be expected under the slave system, in hands less humane, less liberal, less Christian ? in the hands of the sordid and the base, the needy adventurer, the mere commercial agent, the cruel or irreligious master, the planter accustomed to the sight of slavery till it loses its horrors, and the attorneys, managers, drivers, and others, whose occupation and emoluments are dependent upon the system ? If to this hour the experiment of the adequate amelioration of the state of slavery, instead of its abolition, has been tried upon the Codrington estates, and under such enlightened, humane, and religious auspices as those of your Grace, and the other members of this venerable institution, and found wanting, what hope can the friends of humanity and religion entertain for spots less highly favoured ? Such fruits of disappointment, with such anxious culture, doubly exhibit the evil and seal the doom of slavery.

I must however add, my Lord, in justice to my own feelings, and for the discharge of my conscience, that if, in avoiding invidious allusions, I have spoken rather of what the Society wished and endeavoured to do, and could not perform, than of what they have hitherto not even attempted, it was not because I have not a strong opinion on the whole question of a religious society continuing to be willing proprietors of slaves, after the light which has broken in upon the evils of slavery, and when with one stroke of the pen they might render their bondsmen free and happy villagers, working for honest wages, and not under the terror of punishment ; transforming them, to the great advantage of all parties concerned, from mere beasts of burden into a well-ordered industrious Christian com-

munity. I am quite persuaded, my Lord, that it is only ignorance of the question, or vague fears of innovation, or some unmeaning phantom of danger, or an improper deference to the prejudices of the West-India interest, that can render any one member of your venerable Board satisfied—satisfied he cannot be—with the continuance of this direful system; a system which paralyses all your efforts to do good to its victims, while it empowers you to inflict upon them the most dreadful evils. No person will, indeed, suspect that the venerable Board will ever abet such cruelties and atrocities as are every day brought to light in our slave colonies; but it upholds the system under which they may be and are perpetrated: nor can its best efforts give security, that at so great a distance abuses will not take place even on its own plantations. But this is a comparatively small matter; it is the example which is most dangerous. The advocate for slavery pleads the precedent of your Society; but the severe master will not, and the needy cannot, adopt all your intended mitigations. The moral influence of such an institution as that under your Grace's presidency, doing what many benevolent individuals have done out of their own little pittance—manumitting your bondsmen and paying them the fair market price for their labour—would be of the greatest benefit in strengthening the hands not only of the private friends of the injured African, but of Parliament and of his Majesty's Government, whose efforts to improve, even partially, the condition of the slave, have been so greatly thwarted and calumniated by interested opposition.

And now, my Lord, I have so far discharged a weight that pressed on my conscience. If there are those who will not forgive me for speaking thus honestly, your Grace, I am persuaded, is not of that number. Whomever I may have offended, your Grace I shall not have offended. No, my Lord; and if there were an individual who, with a devotional spirit to edify a village-flock, and with intellectual qualifications to adorn the highest chair of the most famous university, was best known by every epithet that could express

moral esteem, and honourable confidence; whose earliest title, unheard, perhaps, by himself, but often heard by others, was that of "the peace-maker," and who, in after-life, carried to the highest station in our venerable hierarchy, that patience of investigation, discriminating judgment, and unshaken love of justice, combined with that urbanity of deportment and tenderness of heart, which in subordinate posts of usefulness had won all suffrages, and called forth many a holy aspiration in behalf of their possessor—to that individual would the advocates for this solemn cause look with no measured hope. A cause bound together by the triple bond of justice, humanity, and religion, asks only an enlightened, religious, and impartial umpire.

With earnest prayers to the Great Head of his church, that your Grace may be long spared to preside over the important portion of his spiritual vineyard committed to your charge,

I have the honour to be,

my Lord,

with sincere respect and veneration,

Yc'r Grace's most obedient

and faithful servant,

SAMUEL CHARLES WILKS.

*St. John's Wood Road,
Regent's Park.*

A SERMON,

&c. &c.

GENESIS xlii. 21.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us.

SUCH were the words of Joseph's brethren, when in their affliction, feeling the just retribution of God's providence, their conscience smote them for having sold their brother for a slave. Pathetically says he himself, " I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews ;" yet he adds, that he had done no evil : but he was stolen, and sold, and transported, without any crime or fault, to a foreign land, to wear out, as seemed probable, his wretched life in bitter bondage—just like the poor unhappy, and still more oppressed, human beings in the British slave-colonies.

For I scruple not, my brethren, to apply the text to ourselves. We also are guilty concerning our brother ; and at this very moment, not one, but eight hundred thousand men, women, and children " stolen," to use Joseph's own expressive

word—stolen, themselves or their parents, or forefathers, from their native shores,—and doomed to cruel bondage, to toil, to stripes, and to a life of lingering death, beneath British sway, have besought us in the anguish of their soul, and we would not hear. They are still calling upon us, and their blood will be upon our heads if we refuse any longer to listen to their cry.

It is a relief to my heart to plead their cause this day, and in this place. It befits my office as a servant of Him who came to preach liberty to the captive: it eminently befits this holy day, one of the special duties of which is mercy; for as our Lord taught the Jews, if it be lawful to relieve even a brute beast on the Sabbath-day, how much more to discharge an act of pity to a suffering fellow-creature: it befits this sacred place, where, for forty years, the cause of the oppressed and tortured African has been pleaded by that venerable servant of Christ, our beloved pastor (the Rev. Basil Woodd), whose long and useful life has been devoted to promote the glory of God and the dearest interests, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, of the human race: it befits the present time, when the hearts of all the friends of Christianity and humanity are bound together, as the heart of one man, to burst asunder these cruel fetters, and when especially the question has been brought home to our own dwellings by the recent establishment in this most wealthy and populous parish of the world, of a Society to assist in accomplishing the wished-for object. Let it no longer be said, that, when the anguish

of our brother is thus brought to our ears, we will not hear! Guilty we have been; but may the God of mercy forbid that we should continue to be doubly, advisedly, and obstinately guilty.

I have examined the word of God, to see what it says of slavery; and I have examined with care what that slavery is under which at this moment are groaning nearly one million of our fellow-men and fellow-subjects,—would to God I could say fellow-Christians, which, alas! with comparatively few exceptions, they are never likely to be while they see stripes and oppression identified with professed Christianity. The result of my examination is, that no such slavery as that in the British colonies was known to the sacred writers; for not even the slavery of the children of Egypt was so severe, as appears among other things by the plain fact that the Israelitish bondsmen, grievous as was their lot, multiplied and increased, whereas ours are becoming rapidly exterminated. But even against much milder oppression, less harsh injustice, against every kind of oppression and injustice, the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

Let us examine these two particulars, THE STATE OF FACTS, and THE DECLARATIONS OF GOD'S WORD. And upon the consideration of them, may our hearts be inclined by that most merciful Being, that infinitely gracious Saviour, whose we are, and whom we serve, to ask, "What can I in my humble sphere do towards putting an end to this dreadful state of wickedness and calamity?"

First, THE STATE OF THE FACTS OF THE CASE. And here I know not where to begin, or to end. I cannot, in the compass of a pulpit discourse, describe the horrors of this baleful system; nor, if I could, should I be able to do it without most painfully harrowing up your feelings, and picturing scenes which would ill comport with these sacred hours and these hallowed walls. You have often and liberally exhibited your pity for other sufferers,—for the poor, the ignorant, the wretched; you have stretched out your hand to the heathen; you have been anxious to extend the word of God, and scriptural education, to all parts of the world; but no large class of men is there so ignorant, so wretched, so worse than heathenised, so debased, almost to the level of the beasts that perish, as those for whom I this day plead. I speak to you of fellow-men, fellow-subjects; deprived, I might say, of the possession of their own flesh and blood; the slaves of another; his goods, his tools, his cattle; advertised, and bought and sold as such, with other goods, and tools, and cattle; not excited to labour, like the free-born peasant of England, by wages, and protected against cruel wrongs, but driven like a beast, worked under the lash, and compelled to toil day after day and year after year without any hope of release but death. What must be their moral degradation you may judge, when you find it admitted in the Reports of a religious and charitable institution, that the slaves on their own comparatively favoured estates—estates bequeathed to them for charitable purposes—are so brutalized by West-Indian bondage

that they have even forgotten the little which they knew by the light of nature in their own pagan land, and are living without marriage, like the beasts that perish, in a state of licentiousness not to be described. Now if this be done in the green tree, what must be done in the dry? If on the most favoured spots, the estates of benevolent persons, the properties of religious institutions, the slaves are acknowledged to be thus degraded, what must be their state in other places where there is not the pretence of caring for their souls, and where they are viewed only as beasts of burden, to be employed for the service of their owners?

It was at one time hoped by many persons that this miserable condition might be gradually ameliorated, without being immediately abolished; and for this purpose the British Parliament and Government have exerted themselves for many years, but, alas! with little fruit of their labours. Every impediment has been thrown in the way of the most moderate alleviations of the evil. What opposition and odium has not this nation met with for asking only such scanty improvements as that the slaves should be taught to read the Scriptures and receive religious instruction; that measures should be adopted by which they might have the unspeakable privilege of the Christian Sabbath, without being obliged to make it a day of marketing or of toil upon their provision-grounds to sustain the wants of nature;—that the marriage tie should be legally acknowledged, so that a White man might no longer be allowed with impunity to tear asunder husband and wife, either to sell them

or to make them still more wretched;—that families should not be separated by sale at the caprice of the master, or to pay his debts, but that when taken to the market the child should have the melancholy satisfaction of being put into the same lot with the parent, and the sister with the brother;—that the rights of property should be legally secured to them, so that if they were robbed of any little pittance they happened to possess, the produce of extra toil or the gift of some charitable stranger, they might have a remedy against the wrong-doer;—that they might redeem themselves, if it ever happened to be in their power, by paying a large sum of money for their own bodies, or might redeem a beloved wife or child by paying the unjustly-demanded ransom;—that the cruelties allowed to be inflicted by the master or his agents with that instrument of torture the slave-whip, might be—not abolished—but somewhat more restrained, so as to interpose at least a partial check to the sudden rage of passion or revenge;—that the punishment of women should be rendered somewhat less cruel and indecent;—that the slave should not be driven to his work, like cattle in this country, by the constant terrors or inflictions of the lash:—what opposition, I say, and odium has not our country met with from its slave colonies for proposing even these slight amendments; few of which have even to this hour been adopted in any of the islands, and the most important in none? And what, my Christian brethren, must be the wretchedness of that condition in which measures like these are proposed as valuable ameliorations;

and what the state of things in which the very proposal has called forth every species of contempt and opposition ; and where what little has been done, or pretended to be done, has been only by the voice and power of the parent country, prevailing over the most obstinate reluctance and opposition of the colonists? But, alas! even this boasted little is to this moment comparatively nothing ; nay, it is absolutely and altogether nothing, as respects the first great object—that without which nothing else will avail really to remedy the evil—*the liberty of the oppressed victim*. But even, setting aside for a moment this first great object, which has not been so much as attempted, what has been done even in the way of amelioration ? It were more easy to discover what has not been done ; for to this moment has no legal provision been made for the education or moral or religious instruction of these degraded outcasts, either adults or children : in not one of the colonies has time been allowed to them, in place of the Sunday, to labour for raising sustenance for themselves and their families ; not one of them is there in which daily and hourly acts of injustice and cruelty may not be, and are not, perpetrated ; such as the meanest beggar in this country—nay, even a criminal not legally tried and condemned—would not be allowed to be subjected to. Their learning to read the Scriptures is systematically opposed ; the schools of which so much is told us are not schools to teach reading to slave children. One of the best of them is the Colonial School in Barbadoes, under the

patronage of the Bishop and the chief persons of the island. It appears to be well conducted : but a benevolent person who lately visited it learned, that, out of nearly two hundred children, only three or four were the children of slaves ; the rest were the children of free People of Colour. No : the slave-owners will not allow their slaves to learn to read the word of God ; they are far otherwise employed ; they are doomed to labours most wasteful to health and life ; they are subjected, without judge or jury, or even the order of a magistrate, to arbitrary and degrading punishments ; they may be scourged and imprisoned, and their feet made fast in the stocks, at the will or passion of the master, with or without crime ; they are deprived of those protections of law and public opinion, which the lowliest of their fellow-subjects, the humblest British peasant in this free country, enjoys : their dearest ties are exposed to be broken in upon and burst : many a mother has mourned over a lost daughter, and many a husband over a beloved wife, without the slightest hope of redress, or any punishment being inflicted upon the wrong-doer, in a land where power is right, and the lash is the speedy answer to the indignant remonstrances of outraged nature ; where there is one law for the oppressed, and another for the oppressor ; where even a murmur is rebellion, and resistance to tyranny is felony and treason.

This then is at this very moment the state of our slave colonies, containing nearly a million of human beings like ourselves, created by the same

Almighty Hand, redeemed by the same precious Blood, and capable of the same immortal hopes and enjoyments; but subjected to the power of a handful of persons calling themselves their owners, who wish to retain them in this dreadful condition without hope or remedy. Religion might indeed be some balm to their souls; but, with few exceptions, their souls are still more neglected than their bodies. The efficient religious instruction of the slave population is despised, dreaded, or at best neglected, in almost every part of the colonies. Some benevolent masters resident in this country wish it, and endeavour to promote it; and some pious and well-disposed persons in the islands second their intentions;—let us give praise where praise is due;—but the number is comparatively small; and even in these bright exceptions there is often the greatest dread of a slave learning to read the word of God for himself, so that where religious instruction is professed to be given, it is very generally only by word of mouth from some benevolent missionary. But if we would learn what is the real condition of the slave colonies, we must turn from these bright exceptions to the general voice of public feeling; and what that is appears too plainly and awfully in the indignities and persecutions which have been heaped upon those faithful servants of Christ who have gone out with their lives in their hands to labour under a tropical sun, amidst pestilence and death, to bring these ignorant perishing victims of oppression to a knowledge of Him who died for all, without distinction of clime or

colour, and to whom the soul of the meanest slave is as dear as that of a monarch on his throne. The record were long to tell you of the persecutions and sufferings of these devoted men. Some have already worn the crown of martyrdom; and are enjoying their eternal reward, where tyranny and its attendant horrors are unknown. Others have borne cruel mockings, and spoiling of their goods, and imprisonment, in the same glorious cause. But I will not afflict you with the mournful recital. I might tell you how, when the poor of Christ's flock in this country have not withheld their hard-earned mite to assist to send out Christian missionaries to instruct those neglected people, the tongue of slander has been raised against them; the houses of God have been destroyed; the messengers of mercy persecuted and imprisoned, or driven broken hearted from the scene of their holy and disinterested labours, to seek a refuge in other lands; while the poor slave, now, by the blessing of God on their ministrations, became Christ's freeman, has been subjected to bitter stripes and every aggravation of suffering that legalized or illegal cruelty could inflict, for the testimony of his Lord and Saviour.

Yet I urge not these facts, or the many other facts which I might bring forward of injustice, oppression, and barbarity, for the sake of the individual instances, but only as illustrations of the manifold evils of the system out of which they spring. And I urge them to shew you that such a system is incapable of being ameliorated, so as to render it otherwise than cruel, unjust, and

wicked ; that adequate amendment is impracticable,—it must be utterly exterminated ; it is as unchristian and impolitic as it is cruel ; it enthral and debases the master as well as the slave : to talk of making its victims happy under it, is mockery ; to pretend to be seeking their salvation, while we willingly tolerate it, is hypocrisy. We owe them not merely the abolition of a few of the most glaring enormities,—not merely a little more food, a few new privileges, somewhat less toil, or a curtailment of their stripes ; but we owe them what God gave them, and the oppression of man deprived them of, their right over their own limbs ; that right which the humblest servant of servants enjoys in this and every other civilized land ; that right of freedom without which whatever blessing is poured by a merciful Creator into the cup of life turns to bitterness.

Yes ; and this wretched state is also a state of utter despair, for death only can release its victim. Often does the miserable being, in deep dejection of spirit, flee to suicide as the only refuge from his wrongs ; for while he lives, those wrongs cannot be repaired : if he attempt to escape by flight, he is hunted down ; and when he fondly thinks he has obtained his liberty, he is brought back, perhaps to perish on a gibbet, or, still worse, to suffer the fearful severities of cruel revenge on his mangled body, and this under the abused name of justice, till death often puts an end to his sufferings. When a slave is accused of a crime, there is no indictment preferred ; there is no bill to be found by a grand jury ; he is often convicted on the most

hasty and flimsy evidence ; sentence is passed, no appeal is allowed, the execution takes place without delay, and the sufferer is hanged on the next tree with as little ceremony as if he were a brute animal ; —and all this in a Christian and British colony !

Nor does the misery of the slave end with himself ; his children, too, are condemned to the same heart-rending lot. They are born to no inheritance but that of toils and stripes. And what has the parent done to doom him to this cup of woe ?—Nothing. He has committed no crime ; no crime is alleged against him, any more than against his infant or his unborn child, who are sharers in his fate. He was sleeping in his shady hut in his native land ; his partner and children were around him ; the man-stealer came ; his dwelling was in flames ; the manacles were on his hands ; he saw those he loved no more,—they are now wearing out their life in the same state of wretchedness, unknown to him and to each other : like him, they are sold from owner to owner ; no flaw is allowed in the blood-stained title by which they are held : Christians sell them,—Christians buy them ! their limbs have become legitimate merchandize : if you dispute it, you are told of vested rights, and the sacredness of property, and the ruin of families, and the rebellion of the colonies ; besides, they are tamed now,—the slave-whip has taught them what is the duty they owe their purchasers : you may by law stripe them, and work them without wages, and tear the wife from the husband, and the child from the mother, and reduce their daughters to worse degradation than

even slavery. They are in your power; they cannot go to law with you; and should you inflict the most dreadful cruelties upon them, even murder itself, you have but to do it adroitly and you are safe, for there are few cases in which the testimony of slaves is allowed to be heard against you: they are your goods, your chattels, your farming-stock, just like your sheep and oxen, and their children after them; and not one step has yet been taken by this Christian country to cut off this entail of misery, this perpetuation of wrong,—not even that most reasonable of all measures, to say that the unborn child shall be free. So far from it, British Christians in this very metropolis still continue to talk of “their slaves;” and they will tell you they are happy, and are well-treated: but judge of that, I beseech you, for yourselves, from what has been already stated, and those facts they cannot deny. If they do, ask them for the denial in writing with their names affixed, and I pledge myself to prove I have spoken only what is true. And if they still tell you their slaves are happy, inquire again, “Are their limbs their own? Can you not buy them, can you not sell them, like brute beasts? Can you not tear their wives and children from them? Do you not work them under the lash? May not you stripe them till their quivering flesh calls to Heaven in vengeance on your head? May you not imprison them, and put them in the stocks, at your pleasure? May you not sell their sons and daughters to a stranger? And may not even your hired agents, your menial servants, do all this at your bidding? You say you are kind

to them ; but how know you this ? Can you controul the far-distant agents of your authority ? Can you hear their groans and sorrowful sighings across the Atlantic ? Your intended kindness may never be heard of by them ; besides, you may sell them, and soon you must die, and what cruel master may they not have after your death ? or you may contract a debt, and they may be seized and put up to auction, and scattered to distant parts to discharge it. And all this you call happiness ! Would *you* be happy thus circumstanced ? Would *you* be happy to be a bondman yourself, and to see your children condemned for no crime to the same hereditary inheritance of tears ? ”—This is the true and Scriptural way of judging of such matters ; and the result should be, if you call yourself a disciple of Christ, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.”

And this leads me to the second question for our consideration : WHAT SAYS THE WORD OF GOD UPON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY ? Let us look first at the Old Testament, and then at the New.

Now in looking at the Old Testament I find nothing that resembles the state of West-India slavery except it be that of the children of Israel in Egypt. I know that bondmen and bondwomen are often mentioned, and rules are laid down respecting them with a view to lessen their hardships ; but the cases are wholly dissimilar. There were persons who sold themselves by a voluntary act ; there were others whose liberty was forfeited for their crimes ; others were sold for debt ; others

were captives taken in war ; but what said the law of God of persons stolen, as were the slaves in our colonies or their fathers ? “ He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.” The first title, therefore, was wholly different ; and equally different were all the other circumstances, as might easily be shewn if time allowed. Besides, where do we read of innocent children’s children being slaves in perpetuity ? At the return of the Sabbatical year came the Jubilee, and then the Hebrew servant was free : it was therefore, at worst, only a servitude for six years, unless the party himself wished to renew it. And though this takes in immediately only the case of the Israelite, yet as strangers were to be brought as soon as possible into the pale of the Mosaic covenant, it seems to me virtually to apply to all.

But it is quite out of place to attempt a parallel, as the cases are altogether dissimilar. “ No conclusion,” justly says a revered prelate, who has often joined in our worship in this Christian temple, the Bishop of Salisbury,—“ no conclusion can be formed respecting West-Indian slavery from Hebrew laws, because the conditions are by no means analogous, and because, even if they were, laws neither introduce nor justify every custom which they regulate.” How different the spirit of Hebrew law was from West-India law may be shewn by a single instance. In our colonies, a person sheltering a slave who should have escaped from cruel usage is liable to severe penalties ; and if himself a slave, the crime is highly penal. The nearest

ties of blood do not lessen the guilt; the son must give up the mother, even were it to the most hard-hearted and revengeful master; and I have seen it stated in an advertisement, describing a female slave who had made her escape, that she was "supposed to be harboured by her husband." But what says the word of God on this very point? See Deut. xxiii. 15, 16: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee; he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him." And the argument with which such benevolent injunctions are several times enforced is that affecting one, "Remember that thou also wast a bondman in the land of Egypt."

I notice these texts merely to shew the spirit of the Jewish laws on this subject, without going into detail respecting them: for to the present argument, whatever they were, they have no application; since no such slavery as that we are speaking of existed. The servitude even of a heathen obtained by war was only of a domestic character: our translators very properly do not call it slavery; but be it what it might, the customs of those times are no precedents for us under the bright noon-tide of the Christian day, any more than the Mosaic law respecting divorce, or the treachery of Jacob, or the example of Solomon, who had seven hundred wives, if that were pleaded in behalf of polygamy. This, at least, we know—and it is quite enough to settle the

question—that the Old Testament as well as the New commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves : it moreover appeals to us, saying, “ Have we not all one Father, and hath not one God created us ? ” it commands us, “ Unloose the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free ; ” and it is full of threatenings against every species of injustice : as, for example, “ Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong ; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” This, then, surely, is sufficient for our present argument from the Old Testament.

The New Testament is very explicit as to what ought to be our conduct in all such matters : “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even unto them.” If we apply this rule to ourselves, we cannot doubt that we ought to liberate our colonial bondsmen. The commandment is “ Love,” and “ love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; ” and can greater ills be conceived than those which have been mentioned ? St. Paul classes “ men stealers ” with “ murderers ; ” and what real difference is there between stealing men, and buying and selling them knowing them to have been stolen, as were those unhappy persons, or their parents, by that wicked traffic which is now by our laws justly denominated and punished as piracy. St. Paul again calls Onesimus, who was a runaway slave, “ not now a servant,” or slave, but a “ brother beloved,” and intrusted to him an important commission in the church of Christ ; whereas in our colonies

a slave is not even permitted to kneel at the Lord's table at the same time as a White person. It is also remarkable, that while the Apostle exhorts other classes of persons voluntarily to remain in their present station, he does not exhort slaves (the word "servant" there means slaves) to do so: he tells them, indeed, not to repine under it, so as to offend their heavenly Father and embitter their own spiritual comforts; but he adds, "If thou mayst be free, use it rather." He knew it to be so great an evil both to body and soul, even in the mildest form, that he thought the slave fully justified in wishing to obtain his liberty. The duty of his master to give it to him cannot be questioned, at least upon Christian principles.

But I would not rest the argument on particular texts; I go to the whole spirit of the Gospel: read the discourses and examine the actions of our blessed Lord, and drink deeply into that spirit of love to God, and to man for God's sake, which he enjoined, and there will need no further persuasion to lead you to a right conclusion on this and all other great questions of moral and religious duty. Well was it remarked on this very point, more than forty years ago, by the present venerable Bishop of Salisbury, "Many attacks have been made on the authority of Scripture; but nothing would more effectually subvert its authority, than to prove that its injunctions are inconsistent with the common principles of benevolence, and inimical to the general rights of mankind. It would degrade the sanctity of

Scripture ; it would reverse all our ideas of God's paternal attributes, and all arguments for the Divine origin of the Christian religion, drawn from its precepts of universal charity and benevolence."

The only instance of slavery mentioned in Scripture which approaches that under consideration is, as before stated, that of the Israelites in Egypt, and you well know the displeasure of God on that occasion ; and his signs and wonders and mighty works for the deliverance of his captive people. For the Lord had said, " Say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians ; and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgment." Like modern slave-owners, Pharoah was unwilling to let the bondman go free ; and though plague after plague was sent, " he hardened his heart, and would not let the people go." But God heard their cry, and they were delivered ; but not till Egypt, from being a fertile garden, had become a desert, and there was not a house in which there was not one dead. Oh, that this fearful example of the anger of God against this sin may lead us to see its enormity, and to forsake it ; so that his righteous displeasure may not desolate our colonies, and fall with awful vengeance upon ourselves as a nation, " because that we saw the anguish of our brother's soul when he besought us, and we would not hear."

The present wretched condition of all classes,

the master as well as the slave, in our slave dependencies, shews that the blessing of God has not rested upon the system. I impute no blame to individuals : some I highly respect ; others I pity : I would advocate nothing harsh or personal : many are not involved in slave-holding by any act of their own ; it was their patrimony, and they grieve over its evils, and would willingly diminish them : but the system is too direful to be dealt with tenderly ; it is incurable ; it must be exterminated. The way of doing this is for the legislature to devise ; and may they be enabled to do it with justice and mercy to all parties. The Christian minister's duty is to set forth those moral and religious considerations which are involved in the question, and are far paramount to all points of alleged political and commercial expediency ; though, were this the time and place, it were easy to shew that what the Gospel enjoins is, in this as in all other cases, as nationally expedient as it is morally and religiously right. Slavery is most perilous and ruinous ; and its cost is enormous both in the taxes laid upon the nation to support it, and in the lives of our brave soldiers and sailors who are stationed in the West Indies to protect the master against his slaves. But on topics of this nature I forbear entering.

Having offered respectfully to your consideration the preceding observations, I had purposed to set before you the concurring testimony of wise and holy men on the subject, that in the mouth of many witnesses every word might be

established. I had especially proposed to quote to you the strong and decisive language of several prelates of our own church, whose character and station give great weight to their opinions. I have before me a number of very interesting passages on the subject from Bishops Fleetwood, Drummond, Claggett, Warburton, Newton, Green, Lowth, Law, Thurlow, Halifax, Secker, Vernon, Moore, Porteus, and the present Bishop of Salisbury, all urging the amelioration of the condition of the slaves, and the duty of endeavouring to bring them into the fold of Christ; and several of them setting forth the wickedness of slavery, and pleading for its abolition. But time forbids my introducing them as I could have wished*; and I must therefore hasten on to a few concluding practical remarks.

First, make yourselves acquainted with the subject. I think I have shewn sufficient to prove that it claims your attention. Your oppressed brother beseeches you: let it not be said you would not hear. There is much misrepresentation afloat on this great question: persons ignorant of the system, or interested in its continuance, still speak in its favour: they will tell you that a slave is as well off as a British peasant; but those who will honestly inquire, and judge for themselves, cannot be thus deceived.

Again, take up the question, not as party politicians, but as Christians. We ought to view it as a religious question. The souls as well as the bodies of our distressed fellow-subjects are in

* See Note at the end.

jeopardy ; and it is our duty to endeavour to do good to both. While slavery remains, we can do little good to either.

Be not deceived by partial statements, or diverted from the great object of the abolition of slavery root and branch, by any promises of amelioration. These promises have been held out for many a long and weary year, and have ended only in mockery and disappointment. While slavery exists, its evils can never be cured. The experiment has failed at every trial. More than a century and a half ago, earnest appeals were made, and appeals have continued to be made from time to time since ; but in vain. There is no hope of the slave being prepared for freedom by continuing in slavery ; matters will only grow worse till perhaps some dreadful revolution puts an end to the whole system.

Be not seduced into admitting the right of one man to make another his slave. God gave him no such right: fraud and force first placed the victim in his power, and nothing but the unjust right of the strongest upholds it. If the nation has been to blame in encouraging it, the nation owes compensation to the slave owner ; but this it is the business of the legislature to consider, and to award justice to all concerned : but in this sacred place I speak only as a minister of Christ ; the poor slave is no party to the guilt ; there is no claim upon him ; he ought to be free : be not turned aside from this first principle, otherwise you will never see your way clearly to what the justice of the case demands. View the system just as you would if it were in the next town or

parish ; for what would be wicked in England, cannot be right in the West Indies.

Urge the necessity of prompt and speedy measures. If we do not voluntarily liberate them, as duty requires, and while it remains in our power, the time may come when it may be too late. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the colonists to keep them in ignorance, light is beginning to break in upon them : every thing that is done to better their condition, and to cultivate their understandings, adds to their abhorrence of slavery, and their strength to resist it : every slave who learns to read, becomes more alive to his own wrongs. The press may eventually find its way among them, and they have also the example of other slave-colonies where the slaves have thrown off the yoke,—or the masters themselves, or the legislature, have broken it. Fearful elements are collecting on every side ; a single spark may lead to an explosion : if then we value law, or order, or the just rights of property, or would spare the effusion of blood, or would seek to extend the blessings of our holy religion, let our measures be timely and effectual. Let us be just, before every West-Indian shore gleams and bristles with the weapons of war, to force justice from us at the point of the sword.

Need I add, offer to that Almighty Father who hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the earth ; to that merciful Redeemer in whom all distinctions of bond and free are done away ; to that enlightening and sanctifying Spirit, whose consoling influences can support and bless the

most despised slave, your earnest and unceasing prayers in behalf of these destitute outcasts. You are taught in the services of our beloved church to pray for the “desolate and oppressed,” for “prisoners and captives;” forget not when you offer these affecting petitions, that nearly a million of persons desolate, captive, and oppressed, are within the circle of our own dominions. Nor spare your private as well as your public prayers. The venerable Bishop Wilson composed a prayer which he was accustomed to use, “that God would relieve and comfort all them that are in slavery.” The pious Bishop Andrews has in his devotions several prayers to the same effect; for Sundays, “an act of intercession for captives and slaves;” and another for Wednesdays and Fridays, “for all our poor brethren in captivity, in chains, and in bitter and barbarous slavery.” I mention these examples to shew that in offering your supplications for these our unhappy fellow-creatures, you will not be alone. Blessed be God, many tens of thousands of Christians are bowing their knees before God on their behalf; and not a few of the ministers of Christ have felt it a conscientious duty to bring their hapless condition, as I this day have feebly attempted to do, before those whom the Great Shepherd has committed to their pastoral care.

With your prayers unite your exertions. converse on the subject with your neighbours. Read some of those publications which are issued by benevolent societies to enlighten the public on the question, that you may be the better able to do

justice to it. These publications may be very cheaply procured; and it is intended to establish a depôt for them in this neighbourhood, in connexion with the Anti-slavery Association which is being formed in this parish. No pecuniary collection is intended to be made on the present occasion, my object being preliminary, to invite your attention to the subject; but the names of persons willing to befriend the object, either by donations, however small, or by diffusing information, will be thankfully received by the committee.

Another practical assistance is, to abstain from the use of those articles which cause much of the sufferings and grind down the life of the slave in their production. It would not befit the time and place to dwell upon this point; but I would only remind you of the tenderness of conscience of David, who would not drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, because it was the blood of the men who procured it.

Another service to the cause which is in your power, and the last which I shall mention, is to petition the Legislature on the subject. In the course of a short time it is expected that many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of petitions will be sent in to Parliament, praying for the liberation of our slave population; pleading both for the parent and the unborn child, and praying that human flesh shall no longer be bought and sold in these Christian dominions. In joining your voice to this national expression of feeling you will greatly assist the efforts of his Majesty's Government, which have been constantly impeded by the opposition of

persons interested in the continuance of slavery. What little Government has been able hitherto to effect has been amidst every possible obstacle both in the colonies and at home : and even many of our spiritual rulers and pious members of our church have been so appalled by these clamours that they have hitherto kept aloof from this great work of humanity, scarcely able to discern the real facts of the case amidst the misrepresentations of interested persons. The co-operation, therefore, of benevolent persons throughout the country, and particularly of those who take up the subject as Christians, upon the simple principles of the Gospel, will be necessary both to strengthen the hands of the public authorities to the work already begun, and to carry it on till not one slave shall exist in the British dominions. It has been justly remarked by a much respected nobleman, a zealous friend of all our religious institutions, Lord Calthorpe, that “ if the whole of the middle class of society would strongly express their opinion, slavery would not continue a single day.”

By your love then to your Saviour ; by your sense of gratitude to Him for his mercies to yourselves, to your souls and bodies, to your beloved offspring, and to all that are dear to you ; I beseech you remember these your brethren in bonds as bound with them. Look forward with hope to the blessed day when, no longer smarting beneath the scourge, but as free and happy villagers, under the wholesome and mild restraint of law, they shall repair to their daily labours and reap honest wages, and buy bread for their children with the

fruits of their industry ; when also they shall call those children their own, and not the slaves of another ; when they shall have the comforts of a Christian Sabbath and go to the house of God to join in the prayers and praises of their fellow-worshippers in every land ; when, in place of the horrible licentiousness which now prevails both among Blacks and Whites, marriage shall be encouraged, and its ties be every where rendered sacred ; when the younger women, now too frequently trained to the service of vice, shall live in meekness and purity as disciples of Christ ; when the Christian minister or missionary shall no more be subjected to lawless violence or legal persecution, no more languish with fever in the noisome prison-house, or sink a blessed martyr for the name of his Saviour and love to those for whom he shed his blood, but be received and cherished as the servant of Christ and a harbinger of mercy to mankind ; when the Bible shall be in every hand, and all be permitted and encouraged to read it ; when even in this now desolate part of the Messiah's heritage, the Saviour shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied ; when master and servant shall rejoice together in their common Lord, and meet as brethren at his holy table ; when these sable sons of Ethiopia shall stretch out their hands to God ; and, to conclude all, when that blessed day shall dawn when " the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Halleluiah. Amen."

NOTE.

IN adducing a few of the Episcopal testimonies adverted to in the Sermon (page 33), the author will commence with some valuable statements from a treatise published more than forty years ago, by the present much-esteemed Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Burgess, and entitled "The Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade upon Grounds of natural, religious, and political Duty." The writer of these pages casually discovered a copy of this scarce publication in the British Museum, six or seven years ago, when the Anti-slavery question had begun to be agitated, and copied out a number of interesting passages, some of which have been already given to the public elsewhere; but they well merit being re-quoted. May that highly revered prelate live to see completed that great work to which he thus early devoted his humane and pious energies!

A Liverpool Clergyman, of the name of Harris, had published a pamphlet in defence of slavery; which he represented as a dispensation of Providence, a state of society recognised by the Gospel;—in which the reciprocal duties of masters and slaves are founded on the principle of both being servants of Christ, and are enforced by the Divine rules of Christian charity. The following are some of the indignant observations of the Bishop, on witnessing such a prostitution of the sacred truths and obligations of religion:—

"Reciprocal duties!" he exclaims, "Reciprocal duties!—To have an adequate sense of the propriety of these terms, we must forget the humane provisions of the Hebrew law, as well as even the liberal indulgence of Roman slavery, and think only of WEST-INDIA SLAVERY! of *unlimited, uncompensated, brutal* slavery, and then judge what *reciprocity* there can be between absolute authority and absolute subjection; and how the Divine rule of Christian charity can be said to enforce the *reciprocal duties* of the West-India slave and his master. Reciprocity is inconsistent with every degree of real slavery." "Slavery cannot be called one of the species of civil subordination. A slave is a non-entity in civil society." "Law and slavery are contradictory terms."

The Bishop's treatise is one among many proofs that the Abolitionists *from the first* contemplated the ultimate extinction of slavery as the end of their labours. Would that his Lordship's advice, as to the duty of prompt and complete abolition, had been complied with forty years ago. What horrors had thus been spared to Africa and her sons! what guilt to Europe and her colonies!

"Such oppression," says the Bishop (meaning the state of slavery), "and such traffic" (meaning the slave trade), "must be swept away at one blow. Such horrid offences against God and nature can admit of no

medium. Yet some of the more moderate apologists of slavery think that a medium may be adopted. They think that slavery ought not to be abolished, but modified and meliorated by good laws and regulations. It is well observed by Cicero, that *‘incidunt multe sæpe causæ quæ conturbant animos uti’* ‘is specie, non cum hoc deliberetur, Relinquendane sit honestas propter civitatis magnitudinem (nam hoc quidem improbum est,) sed illud, Possitne id quod utile videatur fieri non turpiter.’ But it is impossible for slavery *‘fieri non turpiter.’*” pp. 82, 83.

The Bishop proceeds to observe, that “All the laws hitherto made have produced little or no benefit to the slaves. But there are many reasons why it is very improbable that such provisions *should* produce any effectual benefit. The power which is exercised over the slaves, and the severe coercion necessary to keep an immense superiority of numbers in absolute obedience to a few, and restrain them from insurrection, are incompatible with justice or humanity, and are obnoxious to abuses which no legal regulations can counteract. The power which a West-Indian master has over his slave, it is impossible for the generality of masters or managers not to abuse. It is too great to be intrusted in the hands of men subject to human passions and infirmities. The best principles and most generous natures are perverted by the influence of passion and habit.”

In reply to those who defend or connive at West-India slavery as a “dispensation of Providence,” and as, indirectly at least, sanctioned by the word of God, he observes,—

“Many attacks have been made on the authority of Scripture; but nothing would more effectually subvert its authority than to prove that its injunctions are inconsistent with the common principles of benevolence, and inimical to the general rights of mankind. It would degrade the sanctity of Scripture; it would reverse all our ideas of God’s paternal attributes, and all arguments for the Divine origin of the Christian religion drawn from its precepts of universal charity and benevolence.” “That any custom so repugnant to the natural rights of mankind as the slave trade, or *slavery the source and support of the slave trade*, should be thought to be consonant to the principles of natural and revealed religion, is a paradox which it is difficult to reconcile with the reverence due to the records of our holy religion.”

His Lordship then proceeds to shew, 1st, That slavery and the slave trade are inconsistent with the principles of nature (in allusion to his opponent’s argument), deducible from Scripture. 2d. That no conclusion can be drawn in favour of West-India slavery or the African slave-trade (which the Bishop always classes and brands together) from particular transactions recorded in Scripture; both because the trade in slaves bears no resemblance to the slavery and slave trade in question, and because transactions merely recorded in Scripture history are not sanctioned by the record. 3d. That no conclusion can be formed from Hebrew laws respecting West-Indian Slavery, because the conditions are by no means analogous; and because, even if they were, laws neither introduce nor justify every custom which they regulate. 4th, That the clearest and fullest permission of slavery to the Jews under the Law of Moses does not make it allowable to Christians, because the new law has succeeded to the ritual and judicial ordinances of the old; and we cannot reason from one state of things to another when any great revolution has intervened in the progress of religion. 5th, That, however such permission might appear to make slavery in any degree allowable to the first Hebrew Christians under the Roman government, it does not by any means make it allowable under the free government of this country, because we cannot reason from one form of government to another. 6th, That whatever may be the commercial and national advantages of slavery, (which, however, the Bishop does not estimate very highly: on the

contrary, he strongly insists on its improvidence, and the vast superiority of free labour,) it ought not to be tolerated, because of the inadequacy of these advantages to their many bad effects and consequences. 7th, That slavery and the slave trade ought to be abolished on account of the good which would follow to religion, to mankind, and to ourselves.

It would occupy too much space to condense the whole of the Bishop's arguments, but the following are a few succinct notices. As for the atrocities of the African slave-trade, or the cruelties of West-India slavery, he says there is nothing in Scripture that is parallel to either; but he argues, that "slavery itself (in every form) is inconsistent with the law of nature deducible from Scripture, and therefore with the will of God;" and that therefore "*much more so* are the cruelties of West-India slavery, and the African slave-trade." Slavery, he further remarks, "even in its mildest sense, considered as unlimited, involuntary, uncompensated subjection to the service of another, is a total annihilation of all natural rights." This forcible abduction of liberty, he contends, is inconsistent with the natural rights of society, as deducible from Scripture. In God's first commission to man he gave him dominion over the brute creation; but there is no expression by which Adam or any of his posterity could collect that they had a right of dominion over their own species. The extent of this primary charter, remarks the Bishop, cannot be more forcibly expressed than in the language of our great poet:

O execrable son, so to aspire
Above his brother! to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given.
He gave us only over beasts, flesh, fowl,
Dominion absolute. That right we hold
By his donation: but man over man
He made not lord: such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free.

To those advocates of slavery who would use in its favour the golden rule of doing as we would be done by, the Bishop in reply exclaims,

"Detestable perversion...of the most benevolent of all precepts!" Yet there is one very obvious view, he adds, in which the precept applies to the case of slavery; "for as no person would wish to be reduced to slavery, *or to continue so*, no person whatever should reduce a fellow-creature to slavery *or keep him in that condition.*" "The precept may enjoin the submission of the slave to his master, but it does not enjoin slavery: it neither makes the occasion nor justifies it. Submission is a virtue in a slave; but the exercise of this virtue neither justifies the making of slaves nor the keeping of them. Offences must come, and injustice will prevail; but woe be to them by whom the offences come! It should not be forgotten that, if the precept enjoins submission in the slave, it applies *doubly* to the master; for it enjoins humanity in the treatment of his slaves, AND CONDEMNS HIM FOR KEEPING THEM AT ALL."

To the assertion that the slaves are in a happier condition than the British peasantry, as well as to the absurd opinion, that where there is no positive physical cruelty, (and would there

were nothing even of this!) there is nothing to complain of, the Bishop replies :

“ If no *other* circumstances could be proved, yet the mere privation of liberty, and compulsion to labour without compensation, is great cruelty and oppression. If no other fault could be alleged, the involuntary submission of so many thousands to a few individuals implies, beyond a doubt, the employment of means the most tyrannical and oppressive to secure such subjection.” “ The condition of West-India slaves,” he continues, “ some of the apologists for slavery have endeavoured to recommend by asserting that the slaves are happier than the poor of our own country. However inadvertently this opinion may have been admitted by many, it could have originated only from the possession of inordinate authority and insensibility to the blessings of a free country. Where the poor slaves are considered mere brutes of burden, it is no wonder that their happiness should be measured by the regular supply of mere animal subsistence. But the miseries of cold and want are light when compared with the miseries of a mind weighed down by irresistible oppression. The hardships of poverty are every day endured by thousands in this country for the sake of that liberty which the advocates of slavery think of so little value in their estimation of others’ happiness, rather than relinquish their right to their *own* time, their *own* hovel, and their *own* scanty property, to become the pensioners of a parish. And yet an English poor-house has advantages of indulgence and protection which are incompatible with the most humane system of West-India slavery. To place the two situations of the English poor and West-India slaves in any degree of comparison, is a defamation of our laws, and an insult to the genius of our country.”

The Bishop goes on to point out “ the inconsistency between slavery and the slave trade, and the general principles of our law and constitution ; between the permission of such usages and our high pretensions to civil liberty.” “ If slavery, however modified, is suffered to exist, British law cannot be in force. Why then attempt to modify what is in its very principle inhuman, unchristian, and inconsistent with British law, and the spirit of our constitution ; and which, however its concomitant circumstances might be diminished, could never be rendered not inhuman, not unchristian, not unconstitutional? If justice to our nature, to our religion, and our country demand the sacrifice, why should an act of such accumulated duty be done by halves? Why not rather, by one generous effort of public virtue, cut off all occasion of inhumanity and oppression, with all the pernicious effects of slavery on the slave, the master, and the state?” “ Even if the experience of two centuries did not forbid us to suppose that the *abuses*, as they are called, of slavery and the slave trade, could be effectually checked and prevented by legal authority, yet the very nature of the offence complained of resists the supposition. Oppression, cruelty, the degradation of the human species, and repugnance to the British constitution, are evils inseparable from slavery and the slave trade.”

The Bishop even apprehends injury to the mother country, by the baneful reaction of her colonial slave-system. He dreads the influence of West-Indian residents, on their return to England. “ The air even of this land of liberty,” he remarks, “ may not be able to dissipate their West-Indian habits of absolute dominion.”

With these views of the subject, the reader cannot wonder that the Bishop maintains, that “ no British subject can be exempt from the duty of doing every thing in his power towards procuring the abolition both of West-Indian slavery and the slave trade ; customs in every way repugnant to religion, humanity, and freedom.” He particularly urges the subject upon his

brethren of the *sacred order*.—The clergy, it seems, had been reproached by the West-Indian party for their zealous efforts for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery.

The Bishop vindicates them; remarking, that “If no British subject is exempt from the duty of doing every thing in his power towards preventing the continuance of so great a political as well as moral evil, more especially are not those subjects whose business it is to teach what it is every man’s concern to know; the interpreters of God’s word, which is so flagrantly violated by West-Indian slavery and its consequences.” “Instead of wishing to restrain the exertions of any order of men or individuals, in this cause of human nature, let us rather of all ranks, professions, and persuasions unite—in the name of the *common Father* of mankind—in the name of Him who died to save us all—in the name of Faith, of Charity, and of Liberty, to implore those who have the power, to extirpate a system of cruelty and oppression which has been so long suffered to exist, to the dishonour of human nature, the discredit of a Christian nation, of a generous and enlightened people, and the disgrace of a free constitution!”

“Whether,” observes the Bishop, “all the cruelties imputed to the slave trade, and to slavery, can or cannot be substantiated; whether the cruelties complained of can be mitigated or not; *the very existence of slavery*, as long as it is permitted, must be a heavy reproach to this country, and a discredit to the age which can tolerate it.” “Whatever a Machiavellian in politics or commerce may urge to the contrary, slavery ought to be abolished, because inconsistent with the will of God.” “It is not a question to be argued merely by statesmen and publicists, but the natural and scriptural illegality of slavery may be judged of on grounds infinitely superior to all commercial considerations (as much superior as the soul is to the body, as the interests of eternity are to the concerns of a day,) by every one that can feel for his fellow-creatures, and can be determined by every one that can read the Scriptures.” And, adds his Lordship, “Whatever opposition may be made by interested persons for a time, we cannot doubt that the great principles of political justice which form the basis of our constitution, and which ought to come home to the breast of every British subject, will have their full weight in the deliberations of those august assemblies which are to decide on a cause that involves the purity of our holy religion, and the credit and consistency of our national character.”

Such was the testimony of Bishop Burgess in 1789; and with equal, nay, greater force, does it apply to the state of things in 1830. May his Lordship live to see the whole system, as he long ago wished, “swept away at one blow!”

The following Episcopal testimonies are taken from the sermons preached annually before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel during the last century. The author of these pages, in examining a copious collection of the Society’s Reports, three or four years ago, was much struck with the frequent references to colonial slavery, in the sermons formerly preached before the Society (of late years the subject seems to have been overlooked), and copied a variety of interesting passages: some of these have been given to the public elsewhere; but a few are here subjoined, as they may not have fallen into the hands of all the readers of the present pages. Several of them directly and powerfully advocate the cause of emancipation; and those which do not, yet speak in such zealous terms of the duties which the

master owes the slave, that it is quite clear after the experience of so many years of disappointment, that without emancipation they will never be fulfilled.

The annual sermon, in 1711, was preached by Bishop Fleetwood. He adverts to the case of those planters who will not permit their slaves to be instructed in the Christian faith, "a thing so common abroad, that I doubt whether there be any exception of any people of ours." He then asks—

"What can these people think of Christ? That He who came from heaven, to purchase to himself a church with his own precious blood, should sit contented and behold with unconcern those who profess themselves his servants, excluding from its gates those who would gladly enter if they might, and exercising no less cruelty to their souls than to their bodies! One may ask, indeed, with indignation, what such people think of Christ? It would be as hard for them to tell this, as to give an account of what they think of those unhappy creatures whom they use thus cruelly. They see them equally the workmanship of God with themselves; endued with the same faculties, and intellectual powers; bodies of the same flesh and blood; and souls as certainly immortal. These people were bought with the same price; purchased with the same blood of Christ, their common Saviour and Redeemer;—and, in order to all this, they were to have the means of salvation put into their hands; they were to be instructed in the faith of Christ." "Let any of these cruel masters tell us, what part of all these blessings were *not intended* for their unhappy slaves by God, purchased for them by the blood of Christ; and which they are not equally capable of enjoying with themselves?—What account, then, will these masters give of *themselves*, who" "will not permit their slaves to be instructed, and become the servants of their heavenly Master; who bring them, as it were, into sight of the waters of Life, and then withhold them from receiving any benefit from them?" "To the poor pretence that should they suffer their slaves to be baptized, they would immediately become free, we may answer, that were this true, the mischief of it would be no greater in our Plantations abroad than it is at home, where there is no such thing as slavery, but all our work is done by hired servants;—for good wages and good usage will always invite servants, even to the hardest labours. And if this would not turn to a good account, it were better the world should pay much dearer for the pleasures and conveniences those places afford, than purchase them so cheaply at the expense of so much misery, such cruelty and hard treatment of men as good as ourselves, and at the hazard of their souls. But allowing that this would be some inconvenience to the Government, with respect to trade, is there any question whether the blessing of God upon their piety and good designs, in furtherance of his glory in the salvation of men's souls, would make an ample compensation for all the inconveniences and loss it might sustain, by making their slaves, or letting them be made, Christians? But after all, what considering man would run the hazard of being under God's displeasure, by hindering others from becoming Christians for all the profit, honour, and advantage in the world?" "One may wonder how a Christian Government can look upon itself as unconcerned in this affair, and only consider these unhappy wretches as creatures which save the kingdom the charge of transporting horses and beasts of carriage for the islands' service, without reflecting on their shape and form and intellectual powers, and without looking up to Christ their common Master, the Saviour and Redeemer of us all.

"This unconcernedness of the public it is, most probably, that encourages a great many private people, at home among ourselves, to keep these Africans in their native ignorance and blindness, and to continue them infidels

in the midst of a Christian kingdom. These people ought to think what answer they will make to Christ, when He shall ask them, why they would not help to increase his kingdom, and to make their fellow-creatures as happy as they hoped themselves to be by being *called by his name*? Such questions will be asked them, with severity enough, and will require a better answer than, I fear, the subtillest Christian in the world can make: and, therefore, sure, it were better to prevent them by removing the occasion."

In 1714 Dean Stanhope thus addressed the Society:

"Slaves it is true they are, wild and untaught, exposed to common sale, and wrought like beasts of burden." "Is it nothing to you that they are created by the same God, formed of the same flesh and blood, descended from the same common ancestor, endued with the same souls, the same capacities of immortal happiness; nay, which should touch us more tenderly than all the rest, that they also are redeemed by the same precious ransom? Birth and fortune, climate and complexion, barbarism and servitude, are only circumstantial differences, such as ought not to be made too great reckoning of, when the essential parts continue the same. A good man will find but too much ground for grief and pity, but none at all for neglect, contempt, or inhuman treatment, even in the meanest and most abject of his own species."

"With respect to the Slaves," said Dean, afterwards Bishop Berkeley, preaching before the Society in 1731, "our reformed Planters might learn from those of the Church of Rome, how it is their duty and interest to behave. Both French and Spaniards have intermarried with Indians, to the great strength, security, and increase of their colonies. They take care to instruct both them and their Negroes in the Popish religion, to the reproach of those who profess a better."

In a sermon, preached by Bishop Claggett before the Society in 1736, occurs the following passage:—

"Nor has God put the poor Negroes into our power for no other end but that we might use them ill, as Pharaoh did the Children of Israel, when, under a pretence that he might be better served by them himself, he would not suffer them to serve at all the Lord of heaven and earth, who made both him and them. But the cause of the Negroes hath been so well pleaded by others, who have spoken before me on this occasion, that I do not think myself capable of adding any thing on that head."

Bishop, afterwards Archbishop Secker, preaching before the Society in 1740, remarked,—

"The next objects of the Society's concern were the poor Negroes. Their servitude is most laborious, their punishments most severe. And thus many thousands of them spend their whole days, one generation after another, undergoing with reluctant minds continual toil in this world, and comforted with no hopes of reward in a better. For it is not to be expected that masters, too commonly negligent of Christianity themselves, will take much pains to teach it to their slaves, whom even the better part of them are in a great measure habituated to consider, as they do their cattle, merely with a view to the profit arising from them. Not a few have openly opposed their instruction, from an imagination that baptism would entitle them to freedom. Others, by obliging them to work on Sundays to provide themselves necessaries, leave them neither time to learn religion in, nor any prospect of being able to subsist if once the duty of resting on that day becomes part of their belief. And some, it may be feared, have been averse to their becoming Christians, because, after that, no pretence will remain for not treating them like men."

In the sermon preached before the Society by Bishop Drummond, in 1754, it is remarked, of the people living in our plantations,—

"Nor is it entirely imaginary that, by having the absolute command of so many of their fellow-creatures as slaves, men may contract habits of hard-heartedness, tyranny, and voluptuousness, from which they would otherwise have been free. Whatever are the causes, it is to be feared that a spirit of intemperance and extravagance, and an abandoned way of living, is too prevalent in many of our colonies."

The Society was addressed, in 1766, by Bishop Warburton. That powerful master-spirit at once traced the whole evil to its root, the cruel and unjust institution of slavery. He utterly denies the right of one man to hold another in slavery; and attributes the origin and continuance of the system to avarice, and injustice, and tyranny.

"From the *free savages*," he remarks "I now come to the *savages in bonds*. By these I mean the vast multitudes yearly sacrificed by the colonists to their great idol, the god of gain. But what then, say these sincere worshippers of mammon, they are our own property, which we offer up. Gracious God! to talk (as in herds of cattle) of property in rational creatures! creatures endowed with all our faculties, possessing all our qualities but that of colour; our brethren both by nature and grace, shocks all the feelings of humanity, and the dictates of common sense. But, alas! what is there in the infinite *abuses* of society which does not shock them. Yet nothing is more certain in itself, and apparent to all, than that the infamous traffic for slaves directly infringes both Divine and human law. *Nature* created man free; and *grace* invites him to assert his freedom.

"In excuse of this violation, it hath been pretended, that, though indeed these miserable outcasts of humanity be torn from their homes and native country by fraud and violence, yet they thereby become the happier, and their condition the more eligible. But who are *you* who pretend to judge of another man's *happiness*; that state which each man, under the guidance of his Maker, forms for himself; and not one man for another? To know what constitutes mine or your happiness, is the sole prerogative of Him who created us, and cast us in so various and different moulds. Did your slaves ever complain to you of their *unhappiness* in their native woods and deserts? or rather let me ask, did they ever cease complaining of their condition under you their lordly masters; where they see indeed the accommodations of civil life, but see them all pass to others, themselves unbenefited by them? Be so gracious then, ye petty tyrants over human freedom, to let your slaves judge for themselves, what it is which makes their own *happiness*."

As an apology for the Society whose cause he pleaded, and which might seem to fall under the censure which he had pronounced upon slave-holders, the Bishop goes on to remark, that

"By the ceaseless change and alienation of property, this corporation has become the innocent partakers of the fruits of this iniquitous traffic. We have had bequeathed unto us, in trust for the Propagation of the Gospel, by a very worthy benefactor, a *plantation stocked with slaves*;—a legacy perhaps intended as a compensation for these violations of the laws of nature and humanity."

The Bishop expresses his hopes that God, out of this evil, would thus educe good: but nothing could be more conclusive than his whole argument to shew the duty of emancipating these unjustly detained persons at the first opportunity. If preparation for freedom be alleged to be necessary, more than sixty

years have since elapsed, and surely they must be prepared by this time. But this subject, important as it is, is not the present theme.

The following important passage is extracted from a sermon, by Bishop Green, preached before the Society in 1768.

"A great consumption of human stock is acknowledged to be made by our colonies. How far this may be owing to the hardness of their fare, or the severity of their task-masters, or the rigour of their service, it may be difficult to know; but the Sabbath, which to other mortals is a respite from labour, is to them, it seems, no day either of rest or of improvement. And will not he who is Lord of the Sabbath look with displeasure on such of his disciples as pay no regard to his wise and holy institution? As men, it will become us to soften the miseries and hardships of that servitude in which these poor Africans are placed; to treat them with all the lenity which such a state will admit; and though we profit by their labour, not to impose on them such hard and rigorous tasks as are injurious to health and incompatible with any degree of self-enjoyment. As Christians, it will behove us to allow such means of religious instruction as are suited to the unimproved state of their understandings, and to recommend that instruction by the incitement of a good example; to explain to them, on every proper occasion, the saving truths of the Gospel; to encourage their patient continuance in well doing, by the gracious assistances it promises, and the assurances it affords; to animate their hopes, under the hardships they suffer, with the prospect—not indeed of returning, as they imagine, to their own, but of being removed to that better country, where it is said, 'They who came out of great tribulation shall serve God day and night in his temple, shall neither hunger nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them; but the Lamb shall feed them and lead them to fountains of living water.'"

The celebrated Bishop Newton, in his Sermon before the Society in 1769, is honest in reprobating not merely the abuses of West-India slavery, but the system itself.

"Whatever necessity may be pleaded for it, it is greatly to be lamented that there is any such thing as slavery anywhere. As Moses said, *would God that all the Lord's people were prophets*, so I would say, would God that all mankind were free, that those who are bound were free, and that those who are free may so use their liberty as not to abuse it unto licentiousness!"

Bishop Lowth remarked, in his sermon before the Society in 1771,—

"If their masters, tyrannizing over this wretched people with a despotism beyond example, are determined to keep their minds in a state of bondage still more grievous than that in which they hold their bodies; if they will not allow them time and opportunity for acquiring religious knowledge, and attending the worship of God; if, instead of providing instruction for them, they will not even suffer them to be instructed, these seeming advantages will become the greatest obstacles to their conversion: and all endeavours towards it, how earnestly soever exerted by others, must fail of their desired effect."

"The fairest prospect for the Society of doing effectual service in this part of their charge, arises from a happy occasion which has enabled them to exhibit an edifying example to other masters in the same circumstances, by the manner in which they themselves treat a number of slaves committed to their own trust and management. By the blessing of God upon their endeavours, they will shew, by experience and in fact, that humane treatment will soften their tempers, abate their prejudices, and calm their

vindictive spirits ; that a due attention given to them and their concerns, in regulating their families, taking care of *their wives*," [the good Bishop took for granted they were married.] "and children, and supplying them with necessaries and conveniencies, will make them sensible of the benefits of civil life, will humanize them, and render them more ready to learn, and more capable of being taught."

The sermon preached before the Society, by Bishop Edmund Law, in 1774, remarks,—

"The planters draw their profits out of the painful drudgery and hard service of these very wretches whose state is rendered (and generally without any fault of theirs) more intolerable than that of even the beasts of the field, inasmuch as they are more capable of feeling and reflecting on it ;—who are forced to drag on a tedious miserable existence, in worse than *Egyptian* darkness, and seldom suffered to arrive at any knowledge of the true God, or to behold the light of his holy Gospel ; though we well know (whatsoever our pride and arrogance may suggest to the contrary) that these are of the very same nature and origin with ourselves ; that one God, the great *Lord and lover of souls*, is the *maker of them all*, and *fashioneth their hearts alike* ; and has communicated to them all an equal capacity of knowledge, virtue, and religion, had they but equal means of cultivating and improving it....Can persons, then, who are guilty of so great ingratitude and inhumanity, as to refuse these forlorn creatures the least means of bettering their condition ; can such persons ever answer it, either to the common Father of all, or to the lowest of these their brethren ?"

In a sermon preached before the Society, by Bishop Thurlow, in 1786, his Lordship says,—

"Must it not be a matter of some surprise, that the characteristic humanity of the British nation, ever prompt to sympathize with distress, should not yet have been exercised towards this unfortunate class of human beings ? The only efforts that have been hitherto made for their relief, have been owing to the compassionate feelings of the members of this Society, who, in the plantations of which they are trustees, have set the laudable example of instructing and converting them : [the Society believed so ; but, alas ! they were grossly deceived by their agents, as was afterwards proved :] and who, if their earnest representations could remove the prejudices of the self-interested, and attract the notice and approbation of Government, would cheerfully employ their worthy missionaries on so heavenly an errand, as the *general improvement and conversion of the Negroes* ; and would 'rejoice with joy unspeakable,' to see them grafted into the body of Christ's church."

This conduct was highly honourable to the Society. Might not its present members, with great propriety and effect, continue this good work ? Their earnest representations to Government for "the general improvement and conversion" of Negro slaves were never more needed than at present.

Similar passages highly honourable to the several Right Reverend preachers might be quoted from the sermons delivered before the Society by the following prelates : Moore in 1782, Warner in 1787, Bagot in 1792, Prettyman in 1795, Sutton in 1797, and Vernon in 1798. But the limits of this Note are already over-stepped, and they must be omitted. But it would be unpardonable wholly to omit the testimony of Bishop Porteus, that enlightened and zealous friend of the oppressed African. In his sermon before the Society in 1783, he dwelt strongly

upon the duty, not only of civil amelioration and religious instruction, but of emancipation; a plan for which he pointed out, which had the Society acted upon, all their slaves had long ago been free and happy Christian villagers. He thus feelingly pleads their cause:—

“But there is *one class* of our fellow-creatures, which has such distinguished pre-eminence in misery of almost every kind, and which so exactly corresponds to all that variety of wretchedness enumerated in the text [Luke iv. 17—20], that one would almost be tempted to conclude our Saviour actually alluded to them, and had their case among the other great events of futurity in his eye. For when he speaks of ‘the poor, the broken-hearted, the blind, the captive, the bruised,’ who can forbear thinking on that unhappy race of beings, the African slaves in our West-Indian Colonies? If there are any human creatures in the world, who concentrate in themselves every species of evil here enumerated, who are at once poor, and broken hearted, and blind, and captive, and bruised, our Negro slaves are beyond comparison those creatures. Even in a *literal* sense, this description is in several circumstances a just picture of their situation; but in a figurative and spiritual meaning, it may with the strictest truth be applied to them. They are in general considered as mere machines, and instruments to work with, as having neither understandings to be cultivated, nor souls to be saved.”

“A condition such as this, in which so many thousands of our unoffending fellow-creatures are involved, cannot but excite the compassion of every feeling heart; and it must be matter of no small surprise, and of the deepest concern, that, excepting a few instances which deserve the highest praise, no effectual means have yet been put in practice, either on the part of those individuals who are most nearly interested in the welfare of these poor wretches, or of the government under which they live, to rescue them out of this spiritual captivity (so much worse than even that temporal one, heavy as it is,) to which they are condemned. Almost the only considerable attempts that have been made to deliver them from this deplorable state of ignorance, have been made by this venerable Society; who have had this object, among others, constantly in view, and in the prosecution of it have not been sparing either of labour or expense. But it must be owned, that our endeavours have not been hitherto attended with the desired success. This, however, has been owing, not to what some are willing to suppose an impossibility in the nature of the thing itself; not to any absolute incapacity in the Africans to receive or retain religious knowledge; but to *accidental*, and I trust surmountable causes; to the prejudices formerly entertained by many of the planters, against the instruction and conversion of their slaves; to the want which the latter have experienced of sufficient time and opportunity for this purpose; to the abject, depressed, degraded, uncivilized, unbefriended, immoral state, in which the Negroes have been so long suffered to remain; to the very little attention paid to them on the part of Government; to the total want of laws to protect and encourage them, and to soften in some degree the rigours of their condition.”

The Bishop proceeds to detail various excellent plans for the “present comfort and future salvation” of the Society’s bondsmen, and points out for imitation the comparatively humane and religious slave-regulations of France and Spain, as contrasted with ours. The French code, he said, gave to the slave all the Romish festivals to labour for himself; permitted no Sunday market, prohibited masters and managers corrupting their female

slaves, did not allow of the separation of families by sale, or the use of immoderate punishments. His Lordship proceeds to shew that the venerable Society ought to commence the work of civilization and conversion with its own trust estates in Barbadoes ; for which, he justly states, they had already shewn a laudable Christian anxiety, and urged many excellent measures, and been at great expense. But he adds :

“ It is greatly to be doubted whether these directions have always been punctually complied with in the degree, and to the extent proposed ; or if they have, there is but too much reason to fear, that they have by no means fully answered the good intentions of the Society. The truth is, these are *excellent beginnings*, but they are *only* beginnings of an effectual and vital conversion of the Negroes.” “ It is the clear and decided opinion of every man who has considered the subject thoroughly, and has had opportunities of observing and studying, for a long course of years, the temper, the disposition, the manners, the capacities, the treatment, and the condition of our Negro slaves, that in their present state of debasement and degradation, sunk as they are below the level of the human species ; treated merely as animals doomed to labour ; cut off almost entirely from the protection of the state, and the advantages of social life, with scarcely any substantial comforts and indulgences to cheer their spirits, to excite their ambition, to encourage their hopes, they are hardly capable of receiving any deep and lasting impressions of religion.....If ever we hope to make any considerable progress in our benevolent purpose of communicating to our Negroes the benefits and the blessings of religion, we must first give them some of the benefits and the blessings of society and of civil government.”

His Lordship then proceeds to detail the particulars of his humane and enlightened plans ; the issue of all which he did not scruple to avow, was—not perpetuated bondage for half a century from the date of his sermon—but “ emancipation.” This he looked to as the great object of his benevolent labours, and that without which every thing else would fall short of the demands of Christianity and justice.

And this *is* still the great object ; for—to adduce but one testimony more, and still confining the evidence to Episcopal authority—most justly did Bishop Horsley, with that boldness that became his high office and responsibility before God, remark in one of his speeches in the House of Lords,—“ Slavery is injustice which no considerations of policy could extenuate ; but its impolicy is equal to its injustice.” “ Allowing slaves to be pampered with delicacies, and put to rest upon beds of roses, they could not be happy ; for a slave must be still a slave.”